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TRAITS OF AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN FOLK-TALE,  
COMPARED WITH THOSE OF ABORIGINAL AMERICAN TALES.

THE story of the Two Brothers, which is inscribed on a papyrus dating back to the XIX<sup>th</sup> Egyptian dynasty, has in its opening episode a certain resemblance to that of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. It is more remarkable, however, for the evidence it affords of the existence in early Egypt of ideas current in the folk-lore of many peoples. This applies no less to the folk-lore of the aborigines of the American continent than to that of the peoples of the old world. Indeed many of the incidents of the story can be paralleled by similar incidents in the legends of the Plains Indians of North America, and allowing for differences of environment, the story of the Two Brothers might, with little variation, have emanated from an Indian source. Not that it really did so, as its ideas are found also in the "Arabian Nights Entertainments," and possibly the tale itself in its main features had its birth on Asiatic soil.

The Egyptian story may be regarded as the relation of the misadventures of a younger brother, Bata, through the conduct of two women, of whom one was the wife of his elder brother Anpu and the other his own wife. Bata lived with Anpu, who loved him as a son and was faithfully served by him. Anpu's wife makes improper overtures to Bata while his brother is in the field, but her suit is rejected. Bata goes back to his brother, who, on returning home in the evening, finds his wife apparently ill through violence. She accuses Bata of having beaten her for refusing to lie with him, and declares that if he is allowed to live she will slay herself. Anpu becomes enraged, and goes to the stable to kill his brother when he comes home with the cattle. The returning cattle approach, and the two leading cows, seeing Anpu behind the stable door, tell Bata to flee for his life. He sees his brother's feet, and running away he calls on Ra Harakhti, the Sun, to help him. The god causes a great water full of crocodiles to appear between the two brothers. It is now dark, and in the morning Bata tells his brother what had really happened and then mutilates himself. Anpu now grieves for his brother, but Bata says he is going to the Valley of the Acacia and foretells the events which form the second part of the story. Anpu goes home, kills his wife, throws her to the dogs, and mourns his brother.

The chief action here, that of the deceitful woman who seeks the death of her husband's brother for declining her advances, is the motive of the Arapaho story of "Badger-Woman." A hunter has

living with him a younger brother, of whom he is so fond he will not let him do any work. His wife falls in love with her brother-in-law, and then, after he has refused her attentions several times, she determines to bring about his death. She does not accuse him, as in the Egyptian story, but she digs a hole under the young man's bed, into which he falls, and then, covering him up, she leaves him there to die. Bata is saved by Ra, to whom he prays, but the Indian youth is saved by Gray-Wolf, who hears his cries. Gray-Wolf, who probably represents the sun, calls for other wolves to come, and they dig until they reach the young man, whom they keep with them for some time, and finally take home to his brother. When the husband hears the story he devotes his wife to death and she becomes the prey of the animals who had rescued her brother-in-law. In both the Egyptian and the Indian stories animals are endowed with speech. The cows converse with Bata as though they are human like himself, and so in the Arapaho story Gray-Wolf cries out, like an old man, when he calls the other wolves, and they, when they dig out the young man, question him about his fate. The incident of the sudden appearance of the stream full of crocodiles can be paralleled from many Indian sources. The crocodiles are a purely local feature, but in an Arapaho story, "The Flood," a river suddenly appears to arrest the progress of a skull which is seeking to devour a family it has fed and who are fleeing away from it. Here, however, the skull passes the river as though on ice. In many Indian stories impediments are placed in the way of pursuers, but usually they appear as the result of mere wishing, instead of through appeal for divine aid, although probably some such assistance is supposed to be behind the wish. A canyon with steep cliffs is the most effectual mode of stopping a pursuing enemy, and it is just as much a mark of local coloring as the river of crocodiles of the Egyptian story. The act of mutilation performed here by the younger brother in testimony of his innocence is unexampled in American mythology, so far as I know, and it evidences that the latter belongs to a more primitive area of culture than that represented by the story of "The Two Brothers."

We come now to the second part of this ancient story, that which narrates the misadventures of Bata, the younger brother, through the agency of his own wife. Bata's first act after arriving at the Valley of the Acacia, which is evidently near the sea, is to draw out his soul and place it in the top flower of the acacia for safe keeping. This external location of the soul to protect its owner against being killed is a very common incident in ancient legendary lore, where, however, usually it is spoken of as the heart. It is not an uncommon incident of the stories of the American Indians. The dwarfs

are said to leave their hearts at home, when they go on their cannibal excursions, and if their hearts are pierced they fall down dead wherever they are. In America, however, the feather would seem to take the place of the flower as the habitation of the soul. In the Arapaho story of Blue-Feather the soul of the hero is supposed to reside in his blue feather headdress or in a single blue feather. This feather, or a portion of the headdress, escapes destruction when the hero is trampled to death by buffalo, and hence he can be again restored to life. In the Norse tale of the "Giant who had no Heart in his Body," the heart is placed in an egg for safe keeping, and in the well-known story of "Punchkin" the magician's heart is in the form of a little green parrot, which is in a cage hidden below six jars of water located in the centre of a jungle and guarded by myriads of demons.

Having put his soul in a safe place, Bata makes himself a home by building a tower. One day he meets the Ennead of nine Gods, who are sad for him, and the Sun (Ra) tells Khnumu to make him a wife. The craftsman god thereupon makes Bata a mate "who was more beautiful in her limbs than any woman who is in the whole land." That might well be, as every god was in her. When Bata goes hunting he tells his wife not to go outside of the house, as the sea might seize her, and if so he could not rescue her. He then tells her about his soul and that if it were to be found by another he would be vanquished. The woman does not obey him, but goes out of the house and walks by the side of the acacia. The sea sees her and sends waves after her. She runs into the house, and the sea asks the acacia to catch hold of her. The acacia seizes a lock of her hair, which it gives to the sea, and the sea carries it to Egypt and drops it in the place where Pharaoh's linen is washed.

Disobedience to legitimate instructions is a common source of evil in folk-lore tales, and usually it is ascribed to a woman, as in the story of Eden. In the Arapaho legend of "Splinter-Foot-Girl," the girl is warned not to pay any attention to the shinny players who would come near the tipi. She disobeys at last and is carried away by the buffalo. The story of "Found-in-Grass" turns on the curiosity of a wife who has been told by her husband not to take notice of any one who should speak to her from outside the tipi. Twin brothers, who are born in an extraordinary manner through her disobedience, get into various adventures through their desire to find out why their father forbids them to go to certain places. In the course of their adventures one of them, who is afterwards Found-in-Grass, is carried away by a strong wind—as Splinter-Foot-Girl is drawn along by the shinny ball and carried off by the buffalo. What incited the wife of Bata to quit the tower we are not told, but probably, as in many

other cases, it was in order to find out what would happen in case she disobeyed the command.

The lock of hair carried to Egypt by the sea scents Pharaoh's linen, and search is made for the cause of the trouble. The chief of the washers finds the lock of fragrant hair, which he takes to Pharaoh. The king sends for the scribes and wise men, and he is told that the hair belongs to a daughter of Ra, and that the strain of every god is in her. On their recommendation, messengers are sent to every land to discover the woman, and many go to the Valley of the Acacia. These are slain by Bata, except one man, whom he allows to return to report to Pharaoh what has taken place. Another party is sent to the Valley, and with them a woman who is furnished with many attractive ornaments. The woman brings the girl back with her and there is great rejoicing. The girl is made a princess and Pharaoh speaks with her with reference to her husband. She tells him the story of Bata and his soul and asks him to have the acacia-tree cut down and chopped up. Pharaoh accordingly sends soldiers for the purpose. The tree is cut down, and when they cut the flower upon which was placed the soul of Bata, he falls down dead. This and what follows had been foreseen by Bata and told by him to Anpu, who now acts upon his brother's instructions. The story continues: "And Anpu, the elder brother of Bata, entered his house; he sat down and washed his hands: one gave him a pot of beer, it foamed up; another was given him of wine, it becomes foul. He took his staff, his sandals, likewise his clothes, with his weapons of war; he set out to walk to The Valley of the Acacia. He entered the tower of his young brother, he found his younger brother lying on his bed; he was dead. He wept when he saw his younger brother verily lying dead. He went out to seek the soul of his younger brother under the acacia-tree, under which his younger brother used to lie in the evening. He spent three years in seeking for it, but found it not. When he began the fourth year . . . he found a seed-pod. He returned with it. Behold this was the soul of his younger brother. He brought a cup of cold water, he dropped it into it: he sat down, as his manner of every day was. Now when night came his soul absorbed the water; Bata shuddered in all his limbs, he looked on his elder brother; his soul was in the cup. Then Anpu took the cup of cold water in which the soul of his younger brother was; he drank it, his soul stood again in its place, he became as he had been." Thus was Bata restored to life.

The incidents of this narrative for which we may expect to find parallels in American folk-lore are the death of Bata and the restoring him to life again by recovery of his soul. The setting of such incidents in the Egyptian story are local. Reference has already

been made to the localization of the soul in a feather, mentioned in Indian stories. When the man Blue-Feather was killed, his body, answering to the acacia-tree, was ground to dust, as the tree was chopped up, the soul escaping destruction in either case. Now, the rising of a cloud of dust into the sky was to be the signal by which Blue-Feather's brother Magpie was to be made aware of his death; just as the foaming of Anpu's beer was to be the signal of the death of Bata. Magpie seeing the ascending dust knows that his brother has been killed and, as a bird, flies to the spot. He hears groaning and then sees a blue feather on the ground. He picks it up and carries it to the sweat-house he had caused to be made. He resumed his human form and places the feather in the sweat-house and then by means of his four magical arrows, which he shoots upwards, he brings his brother Blue-Feather to life again, that is, causes the soul to unite itself to the renewed body. The use of the sweat-bath and the magic arrow is in Indian tales the usual mode of restoring the dead to life, and it is adopted even when there is no visible representative of the soul beyond the body of the dead person. It is a form of the application of *heat*, and possibly here we have evidence of its origination in a cold or temperate climate, as the reference to *cold* water in the Egyptian story may be taken to show that this idea originated in the hot climate of Egypt itself.

In the remaining incidents of the Egyptian story we find several points of contact with American legend. Bata becomes, after the cutting up of the acacia-tree, a great bull with the right markings, and tells Anpu to sit on it and take it to Pharaoh. Pharaoh rejoices when he sees the bull, and gives him silver and gold for Anpu, with which he returns to his village, and loves the bull above all men in the land. Here we have the sameness of nature between man and animal which runs throughout the whole of Indian folk-lore. There is no surprise on the part of the elder brother when the younger says he will become a bull, and Pharaoh loves the bull so strongly because, doubtless, he regards him as an incarnation of a god, Osiris. The bull enters the place of purifying where the princess is, and tells her that he is Bata. She is not astonished, apparently, at being addressed in human speech by an animal. Soon afterwards the princess has a good day with the king. She asks him to swear that he will do whatever she says, and he consents. Then she said: "Let me eat of the liver of this bull, for he will do nothing." Pharaoh is grieved exceedingly, but he has promised and the bull is sacrificed. It shakes its head and throws two drops of blood near Pharaoh's door. During the night these drops of blood grow as two Persea-trees, one on each side of Pharaoh's gate. The people rejoice, and offerings are made to the trees. The king hears of this wonder, and

he has himself adorned with a blue crown and with garlands of flowers on his neck and drives in his chariot to see the Persea-trees. He is followed by the princess, and while he sits with her beneath one of the trees it speaks to her, saying, "Oh thou deceitful one, I am Bata, I am alive, though I have suffered violence. Thou knowest well that the causing of the acacia to be cut down for Pharaoh was to my hurt. I then became an ox, and thou hadst me slain." The idea of the growth of a tree from a drop of blood would be entertained without difficulty by the mind of the Indian who is familiar with the story of Blood-Clot-Girl, who is born from a clot of blood placed in a kettle to be boiled for soup. In destroying a witch or other "wonderful" being it is supposed to be necessary that every portion of it shall be consumed, as the being may come to life again if a single particle of it remains.

The princess still pursues Bata, and one day when Pharaoh was pleased with her, as was Herod with the daughter of Herodias, she made the king again swear to do what she should ask. Then she said, "Let these two Persea-trees be cut down, and let them be made into goodly timber." Now comes the climax, for when the craftsmen cut down the trees, while the princess stood by, "a chip flew up and entered into the mouth of the princess; and she perceived that she had conceived." She bore a male child, which was brought to the king, and there was rejoicing in the whole land. When the ceremony of naming him was performed the king loved him exceedingly, and he raised him to be the royal son of Kush. Afterwards Pharaoh made him heir of all the land. The growth of a child from a splinter is the subject of several Arapaho stories, but here the splinter enters the foot of a young man and causes an abscess, from which the child proceeds. In the story of "Light-Stone," however, a girl accidentally swallows a small round transparent stone, which causes her to give birth to a boy. The boy does not become heir to a king, but he destroys the murderer of his mother's brothers, and brings them to life again, subsequently becoming a stone once more. On the death of the king, Bata succeeds him, and then he brings the case between his wife and himself before the great nobles of the land, how the story does not say, but probably the woman was devoted to the infernal deities, as was the Arapaho wife to the wolves. Bata reigned for thirty years, and then his elder brother Anpu "stood in his place."

It is not necessary to suppose any direct communication between Egypt and North America to account for the existence of common elements in the folk-lore of the primitive inhabitants of these regions, although doubtless there was indirect communication between them through the Phœnicians. Egypt was in close association with West-

ern Asia, so close indeed that the term Ethiopia was applied to southern Asia, as far as, if not including, India, as well as to north-eastern Africa, and a common culture overspread in early days the whole of that region, which included Egypt, Babylon, and Persia, the three great empire centres of the primitive era. Egypt, thus, as a seat of civilization belonged to Asia rather than to Africa, and we may in general terms assert that Central Asia was the real source of the folk-lore stories which gradually spread throughout the old world and thence to the American continent. Even India itself must ultimately have been thus indebted, for such stories antedate the rise of Buddhism, to which has been traced the origin of many folk-tales in their comparatively modern dress.

That the northern part of the American continent should be brought within this early cultural area is evidenced by numerous facts, of which the data of folk-lore furnish many, as shown by the incidental resemblances between the Two Brothers story and similar ones current among the American Indians. In confirmation of this view, reference may be made to a story which under various forms has been traced among many Asiatic and European peoples, that of Eros and Psyche, certain features of which are common also to stories which are still current among the Indians of North America. In the Norse version of that legend the White Bear falls in love with the beautiful daughter of a peasant, and she is persuaded to marry him, as he promised to make her father rich. The girl rides away on the White Bear's back to his mountain home, and at night a man comes to her, the White Bear being an enchanted prince who was able to put on the human form at night but before daylight had to assume his beast form again. We have a perfect analogy to this transformation, except as to the enchantment and the animal form assumed, in the Arapaho story of the Sun, who becomes enamoured of a beautiful girl, to whom he appears during the day as a white dog, but visits at night in human form. Through curiosity to see the features of the human being who comes to see her at night, White Bear's wife lighted a candle while he was asleep. She kissed him and while doing so three drops of tallow fell upon his shirt, awakening him, and after telling her of his enchantment he and his castle disappeared. In the Arapaho story the girl presses her hand on her lover's back, leaving its impress in red paint. The dénouement differs here from that of the Norse tale, as when the girl sees her mark on the dog's back she is so enraged that she strikes it on the head and the dog runs away, returning as a young man to his father's house. He comes back again sometime afterwards and takes away the puppy children the girl had given birth to, who had become little boys, and then she follows him to the sun's home to recover her children.



Many of the incidents of the Norse story, in which the girl searches for the enchanted prince, undergoing many adventures before she recovers him, can be paralleled, however, in other Indian tales. Thus, she makes inquiries of three old women in succession, one of whom gives her a golden ball, another a golden comb, and the third a golden spinning-wheel, to aid her in her search. In the Arapaho story of "Sleepy-Young-Man and the Cannibals," the young man on his travels comes to the tipi of an old woman of whom he asks information and she gives him a piece of sinew to help him on his way. He goes on and receives aid from two other old women, the third of whom enables him to obtain the object of his quest, as the golden spinning-wheel secures the girl's desired interview with the enchanted prince. The girl reaches the country of the Winds who pass her on until she comes to North Wind, who carries her to the enchanted castle where the prince is. Here by means of the golden apple, comb, and spinning-wheel she gains access to the prince. All the bad people burst themselves with rage, and the prince and his wife escape. The Winds are personified also in American story, but they do not aid a girl to release her husband from enchantment. The person in distress there is usually a girl who is carried off by the buffalo and is rescued by the aid of certain animals, one of whom knows where the girl has been taken.

In the Celtic tale of "The Battle of the Birds," a young prince cuts off the head of a snake who was about to overcome a Raven. The Raven becomes a young man, who gives the prince a bundle which he is not to look into until he sees the place where he would most like to dwell. He cannot wait, but looks into the bundle and finds himself in a great castle with fine grounds about it. He wishes to put it into the bundle again but cannot. He meets a great giant, who puts the castle into the bundle on the prince promising him his son when seven years old. The prince marries and has a son whom he is obliged to give to the giant in fulfilment of his promise. The boy lives with the giant a long time and asks him for his youngest daughter in marriage. The giant is angry, and says before the boy can marry her he must perform three tasks. These tasks are very difficult, but he performs them by the aid of the daughter, to whom he is thereupon married. The wonderful bundle<sup>1</sup> has its parallel in Indian story in the bundle which contains a numerous company of soldiers, with their weapons and horses, by whose aid a boy gains victories over the enemy. The Buffalo chief who marries a girl answers to the giant, and three tasks imposed by the giant correspond to the trials imposed, according to another story, on a man

<sup>1</sup> In a West Indian "Nancy Story," in which three old women are the magical agents, a sugar estate comes out of an egg given to a girl.

who goes to recover his wife and son from the Buffalo. The last task the king's son has to perform is the choosing of the giant's youngest daughter from among others, all of them being made to look alike. This he effects by the youngest daughter giving him an agreed sign. The trial by choosing has to be gone through also by the husband in the American story, and he succeeds in discovering his wife in a similar manner.

When the giant's daughter has returned to the bridal chamber with the prince, she tells him they must fly quickly or her father will kill them. She divides an apple into nine pieces and puts two of the pieces at the head of the bed, two at the foot, two at the door of the kitchen, two at the great door, and one outside of the house. Then she and her husband ride off on horseback. Soon the giant calls out, "Are you asleep yet?" The giant repeats the question several times and each time the pieces of apple in turn say, "We are not asleep yet." When the apple outside of the house answers, the giant knows he has been tricked, and he runs to the bedroom and finds it empty. He immediately chases the couple, and at daybreak the daughter tells her husband to put his hand in the ear of the horse and throw behind him what he finds there. He finds a twig of sloe-tree, and when he throws it, twenty miles of thick blackthorn wood grows up. The giant cuts through it, however, and again pursues. A piece of gray stone is then thrown and a mountain twenty miles broad and twenty miles high appears. The giant makes a way through the rocks, and at sunset the husband throws behind him a bladder of water, which becomes a lake twenty miles long and twenty miles broad. The giant endeavors to cross and is drowned. The use of the pieces of apple to delay pursuit by the giant is represented in several American stories by the placing about the tipi of several pairs of moccasins, which call out after the pursuer and thus bring him back. In one of the Buffalo stories the woman leaves her dress behind, and whenever the Buffalo husband asks if she is ready yet, it calls out, "Not yet." In other stories of pursuit, obstacles similar to those which delayed the giant are placed in the way of the pursuer. The nearest parallel to the Celtic series of hindrances is to be found in one of the "Nancy" stories given in Lewis's "Journal of a West India Proprietor." In this tale, which has much resemblance to the above Celtic story, a young man in love with the daughter of a king or headman has to pick out the girl, transformed with her sisters first into three dogs and then three cats. He is successful and receives his bride, but she, knowing that her father will try to kill them during the first wedding night, takes a rose, a pebble, and a phial of water and then rides away with her husband. The rose leaves become a wood of briars, the pebble a high precipitous moun-

tain, and the phial a deep water, in which the father and his magical horse Dandy are drowned.

The Celtic story introduces other adventures through which the prince and the giant's daughter pass before they are married, the incidents of which are due to the Celtic imagination and therefore are not likely to be found in any tale preserved among the Indians of America. John Thackeray Bunce, who has written on "Fairy Tales, their Origin and Meaning," remarks, as to the stories just referred to, that they are "enough to show how the same idea repeats itself in different ways among various peoples who have come from the same stock: for the ancient Hindu legend of Urvashi and Pururavas, the Greek fable of Eros and Psyche, the Norse story of the Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon, the Teutonic story of the Soaring Lark, and the Celtic story of the Battle of the Birds, are all one and the same in their general character, their origin, and their meaning; and in all these respects they resemble the story which we know so well in English—that of Beauty and the Beast. Each form of the legend shows the special genius of the people to whom it belongs, and so it is of the Beauty and the Beast stories of the American Indian, which have a special character of their own due to the condition of civilization of the primitive people with whom they originated, at an era antedating that of the early Hindus, and while the Aryan ancestors were yet inhabitants of Central Asia. In accordance with the cosmical explanation of the old world myths, the story of Eros and Psyche, and, therefore, the other stories, is related to that of the Sun and the Dawn, which vanishes when it beholds the rising Sun. There can be no objection to an analogous explanation being given of the American legends of a similar character. But these represent the more primitive condition of thought, when the Sun was regarded as being a young man, who was rather the sun-bearer than the actual solar body, and who could assume an animal form at will; and the Dawn was a young woman whose beauty is the first flush of light in the sky, which, although really a reflection of himself, is fallen in love with by the Sun, as Narcissus is lost in admiration of his own appearance in the reflecting water.

*C. Staniland Wake.*